

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 653

By Finney

A RESOLUTION to honor and recognize Restoration International Outreach for its remarkable service to Blount County and its effective spreading of the Gospel throughout the world.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this legislative body should recognize those venerable religious institutions and their congregations who, through their unflagging capacity for love, dedication of spirit, and faith in God, strive to enrich the lives of people in their communities and beyond; and

WHEREAS, the good people of Maryville church Restoration International Outreach (RIO) comprise one such congregation, and they are celebrating almost eight years of remarkable growth and RIO's now notable presence throughout the world, and

WHEREAS, "Restoration" refers to healing those who are hurt and restoring relationships between God and His children; "International Outreach" indicates that the mission of this church is to follow Jesus' Great Commission to go forth to all nations, teaching and baptizing; and

WHEREAS, RIO was founded in 1998, with forty-three members meeting in a small, block building and Ronnie Hepperly serving as pastor; since that time, church membership has grown to 1,100 and is steadily increasing; and

WHEREAS, RIO's growth has required extra Sunday services and the establishment of three satellite churches in Blount County. The RIO church family now includes four campuses: RIO Central, with Senior Pastor Ronnie Hepperly; RIO East, with Pastor Dale Buchanan; RIO North, with Pastor Doug Tipton; and RIO 180, with Pastor Brad Bryant; and

WHEREAS, since 1998, RIO's ministries have resulted in 47,707 salvations (persons accepting Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior); and

WHEREAS, evincing a great commitment to mission work, RIO has traveled to fifteen foreign countries: Panama, Honduras, Mexico, Cuba, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, the Sudan, Jamaica, Belize, Sumatra, and Kenya; many times these destinations are located in areas of remote jungle and populated by Indian tribes never before visited by missionaries; and

WHEREAS, with God's blessings and guidance, RIO's various ministries have sown their seeds in foreign countries with wondrous results, including the construction of 77 churches; financial support of 30 churches; convention of 13 evangelistic crusades; redemption of 1,000 Sudanese slaves (purchase of Christian captives from southern Sudan, with release to freedom); provision of clothes, food, and toys as Christmas gifts for 5,000 of the poorest children in Panama; and the purchase of 702 water filter stations in Panama to reduce waterborne illnesses among Indian peoples living along contaminated rivers; and

WHEREAS, serving as a testament to their tireless commitment to Christian service closer to home, RIO has assembled ministries reaching out to alcohol and drug addicts, motorcycle riders, inmates in jails and prisons, the homeless, and others not commonly sought out by other churches; and

WHEREAS, RIO has established a Christian daycare center for young children, as well as a cell ministry, now with 68 active cells, in which members meet weekly in cells of approximately 12 members each for Bible study, prayer, and fellowship; and

WHEREAS, RIO also places ongoing advertisements in the Blount County news media, inviting persons who need God's love and grace to attend RIO; and

WHEREAS, RIO Central recently purchased 85 acres of land near its central campus to accommodate the growth and expansion of its ministries; such expansion will include construction of a new church, which will seat up to 3,000 worshipers in one service, as well as other ministry buildings; and

WHEREAS, other plans and goals for RIO this year include starting three more satellite churches in or near Blount County; generating 30,000 more salvations; conducting evangelistic crusades in 10 foreign countries, as well as building an additional 75 churches, offering pastor education conferences and actively ministering to prisons in foreign countries; hosting an

evangelistic program on a Panama radio station; and completing its first mission trips to Nicaragua, Chile, and Ecuador; and

WHEREAS, the faithful members of the congregation of RIO of Maryville have most righteously served as bold witnesses for Jesus Christ, and have significantly contributed to the social, cultural, and spiritual vitality of the Blount County community, the State of Tennessee, and the cultures of many foreign countries around the world, and they deserved to be recognized; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby applaud and commend Restoration International Outreach (RIO) for its remarkable service to Blount County and effective spread of the Gospel throughout the world, and we thank the members of this estimable congregation for their steadfast service to God, their global community, and the State of Tennessee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.